



**NORTHCENTRAL UNIVERSITY  
ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET**

Student: **Michael Higley-Vance**

**THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETELY FILLED IN**

**Follow these procedures:** If requested by your instructor, please include an assignment cover sheet. This will become the first page of your assignment. In addition, your assignment header should include your last name, first initial, course code, dash, and assignment number. This should be left justified, with the page number right justified. For example:

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**Save a copy of your assignments:** You may need to re-submit an assignment at your instructor's request. Make sure you save your files in accessible location.

**Academic integrity:** All work submitted in each course must be your own original work. This includes all assignments, exams, term papers, and other projects required by your instructor. Knowingly submitting another person's work as your own, without properly citing the source of the work, is considered plagiarism. This will result in an unsatisfactory grade for the work submitted or for the entire course. It may also result in academic dismissal from the University.

**EL7010-8**

**Dr. Linda Collins**

**Online Learning for the K-12 Students**

**Activity #5: Authentic K-12 Activities**

**Comments:** See full site link here → <http://e-learninghigley.wikispaces.com/EL7010-8-5> for the main portion of this activity. See below for portion two, a summary essay.

**Faculty Use Only**

Hi, Michael, excellent work on the authentic activities. Using Zombies as a topic to get students engaged in geography and science is a fabulous way to gain interest in these subjects as zombies and zombie activity has been forefront in a lot of media over the past couple of years. Using your wiki as a launch pad and the LMS all provide important and detailed information about the activities. You have also included a lot of different ways for students to learn including images show Zombie Threat Levels ☺ and

the all the videos including the fictitious zombie outbreak . You have also included important resources. Now that you have your students' attention and they are getting interested in these subjects, how do you start to transition them to other meaningful activities in Geography and Science? Dr. Collins

Dr. Linda D. Collins    6.9    2.9    April 13, 2014

Authentic K-12 Learning Activities: A Summary Essay

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### Authentic K-12 Learning Activities: A Summary Essay

The authentic learning activities, representing a portion of this assignment is found online at <http://e-learninghigley.wikispaces.com/EL7010-8-5> and consists of an introductory webpage and a link to *BlackBoard Learn* consisting of two authentic lessons – one in geography and one in science. In addition to the learning activities there is a VoiceThread embedded into the first lesson for student engagement. The links and resources provided can be found on my EL7010-8-5 assignment page, and a link to the *e-LearningHigley* home page.

#### **Introduction**

Authentic learning happens when learning tasks occur for a real purpose or situation (Husnin, Din, Karim, Norman, & Hamdan, 2013; Peterson, 2002). Authentic learning activities are valuable educational opportunities for students in all learning environments. The online implementation of authentic activities is especially effective in creating real-world situations, which require problem solving, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and reflection (Hsu & Ching, 2012; Husnin et al., 2013). Activities designed around real-world problems, that are student relevant, allow the learner to apply knowledge learned as practitioners in their content area (Charron, Fenton, Harris, & Procek, 2012; Peterson, 2002; Wu, Hou, Hwang, & Liu, 2013). Finally, the use of authentic activities while incorporating best practices in e-learning align well with the constructivist and situated learning educational theories (Parker, Maor, & Herrington, 2013). These theories emphasize the important and dependent relationship

between real-world experiences and knowledge acquisition (Chitanana, 2012; Goel, Johnson, Junglas, & Ives, 2010).

### ***The BlackBoard Learn Activities***

Authentic tasks require student participation over a sustained period of time, have real-world relevance, and are designed to allow for student choice (Peterson, 2002). These key components help provide students with the opportunity to use a variety of self-selected resources to solve activities, which include problem-solving situations (Parker, et al., 2013; Peterson, 2002; Husnin et al., 2013). Additionally, authentic tasks require collaboration among learners and facilitators, individual and group reflection, and are easily integrated with many content area applications and concepts (Parker, et al., 2013; Peterson, 2002; Wu et al., 2013). Finally, authentic activities result in products that are valuable for learning and practice but are also seamlessly integrated with student assessment (Peterson, 2002; Wu et al., 2013). Especially applicable in online, virtual courses and of particular interest in this exercise, authentic activities encourage synergy of learner, task, and technology that results in a product which is greater than an individual effort (Herrington, Reeves, & Oliver, 2006). The relationship between the learner, the authentic task, and technology is interdependent and supportive with outcomes that include engaged learners and valuable products.

### **Authentic Learning Activities**

Two authentic lessons were created for this assignment, both based around the theme of Zombies. Zombie themed characters, movies, and television shows has been in mainstream media for a few years now and, as a result, has gained popularity with youth of today.

According to Parker, Maor, and Herrington (2013), students are motivated to learn when they are presented with something that is relevant to their lives, and right now Zombies are it! Students are presented with a scenario from the beginning of lesson one that places students in the middle of a “real” zombie apocalypse. During the lessons students will achieve student learning objectives by completing zombie themed tasks that give them opportunities to learn new information, collaborate, interact, and reflect on their own learning through a theme they are eager to participate in.

**Geography lesson.** The geography lesson created addresses the Push and Pull factors often used to explain migration. Push factors are causes with which people tend to be pushed away from certain areas and pull factors are those conditions that attract people to a particular area. These factors may be due to economic hardships, environmental conditions, religious persecutions or freedoms, and even political conditions present in the concerned locations. After learning about push and pull factors and why people leave certain areas of the world students will be presented with a task that places them in the middle of a “real” life zombie apocalypse. During this task students will use an instructor made VoiceThread to discuss, explain, and justify the push and pull factors they chose for reasons why they decided to leave the area in which they currently lived.

**Science lesson.** During the science lesson students will be able to diagnose, explain, and justify reasons for zombie like behaviors using information shared with them by a zombie expert in neurological behaviors in zombies. In this lesson scenario students have fled their once safe living environments and are now trying to understand how and why their family and friends have turned into zombies. According to Charron et al. (2012), providing authentic instructional writing activities promotes a comprehensive approach to writing and knowledge construction. In

this lesson task students are asked to review the scientific information provided, consult an expert, and research additional medical information that might help explain how and why the people around them have turned into zombies. Students are then required to use their scientific journals to record their findings by explaining and justifying their hypothesis for why people become zombies. (Note: this activity is a work in progress and not yet fully completed.)

### **Evaluating the Tasks**

Evaluation of the zombie lessons will be based on a rubric given to learners within the task section of the online course. The rubric for writing and the discussion task includes a focus on academic objectives, which require students to complete a performance task to demonstrate real-world mastery. A characteristic of authentic learning activities is assessments that are realistic, seamlessly integrated with the tasks, and reflective of real-world assessment practices (Williamson, 2010). Additionally, included in the evaluation process are the real-world application of new information, collaborative reflection and discussion, and the individual journal reflection.

### **Conclusion**

Although creating the lessons and rubrics were time-consuming, the use of authentic activities in a K-12 online course results in active learning using technology-supported content that reflects real-world situations. Tasks designed to meet the characteristics of authentic activities integrate and implement problem-solving situations that are rigorous, collaborative, relevant to students lives or interests, and are real-world. Increased use of authentic activities as part of online learning environments may well prepare today's learners the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

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